

## **ReConnect Program | National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 Environmental Questionnaire**

Applicant Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Application Number: \_\_\_\_\_

**Unless the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) Section 106 process has already been initiated with Tribes, the State Historic Preservation Office, or other interested parties, do not initiate the NHPA Section 106 process without first consulting with the Rural Utilities Service (RUS). Please contact RUS by submitting a question through the Contact Us page (available at this link: <https://www.usda.gov/reconnect/contact-us>). Go to the drop-down menu under “subject” and then click “Environmental.”**

The NHPA Section 106 EQ is intended to capture the appropriate information for each proposed site and route included in the application, as well as the overall proposed project. This information will be used in conjunction with each Site and Route EQ and Project EQ to determine the overall compliance of the proposed project with NHPA Section 106 requirements. RUS will use this information and either complete the NHPA Section 106 portion of the environmental review process, or determine the appropriate level of additional impact analysis needed in accordance with 7 CFR 1970: Environmental Policies and Procedures (available at this link: <https://go.usa.gov/xeaXV>). RUS will notify applicants if additional information is necessary beyond what was submitted in each of the EQs.

An applicant may submit a copy of any environmental review document that has been prepared in connection with obtaining permits, approvals, or other financing for the proposed project from state, local or other federal agencies. Such material, to the extent determined to be relevant, may be used to fulfill RUS environmental review requirements. Be advised: once an applicant initiates the NHPA Section 106 process with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO), or other interested parties, the applicant must complete the process even if RUS determines the type of construction activity has “No potential to cause effects.”

The NHPA Section 106 EQ requirement is determined by the applicant’s responses to each of the Site and Route Description questions. For example, if the applicant answers “Yes” to the question, “Is this site on Tribal Land(s)?” the NHPA Section 106 EQ may need to be uploaded as part of the application. A final determination will be made by RUS after the applicant consults with the Agency.

## NHPA Section 106 Questions

- 1) **SHPO Initiation.** Has the applicant sent a notification letter (SHPO Notification LetterTemplate) (available at this link: <https://go.usa.gov/xeYsy>) or a finding letter (SHPO Finding Letter Template) (available at this link: <https://go.usa.gov/xeYsp>) to the applicable SHPO(s)?

NO Do not complete the NHPA Section 106 EQ or initiate the Section 106 process at this time. Please reach out to RUS by submitting a question through the Contact Us page (available at this link: <https://www.usda.gov/reconnect/contact-us>) to determine next steps.

YES Upload the letter that was sent to the SHPO and any subsequent correspondence to the Environmental Documents section of this application. Go to Question 2.

- 2) **Tribal Notification:** Has the applicant sent notification letters (THPO Notification LetterTemplate) (available at this link: <https://go.usa.gov/xeYsf>) or finding letters (THPO Finding Letter Template) (available at this link: <https://go.usa.gov/xeYsG>) to interested Tribe(s)?

NO Do not complete the NHPA Section 106 EQ or initiate the Section 106 process at this time. Please reach out to RUS by submitting a question through the Contact Us page (available at this link: <https://www.usda.gov/reconnect/contact-us>) to determine next steps.

YES Upload the letter(s) that were sent to the Tribe(s) and any subsequent correspondence to the Environmental Documents section of this application. Go to Question 3.

- 3) **Identify Historic Properties:** Review existing information on historic properties within the Area of Potential Effects (APE)<sup>1</sup>. As part of this review, consider information or requests resulting from the notification letters sent to the SHPO and Tribe(s). Include properties that are at least 50 years old but have not been evaluated for eligibility. Sources for this information include databases maintained by the SHPO, literature searches, and cultural resource surveys.

The applicant is encouraged to consult a Cultural Resources contractor to conduct identification efforts – including cultural resources surveys – and provide professional and technical advice and recommendations on the identification of –

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<sup>1</sup> APE is defined as the area in which eligible properties may be directly or indirectly affected by the proposed project.

and effects to – historic properties. If the applicant chooses to consult a Cultural Resources contractor, the contractor must meet the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards (available at this link: [https://www.nps.gov/history/local-law/arch\\_stnds\\_9.htm](https://www.nps.gov/history/local-law/arch_stnds_9.htm)) used by the National Park Service.

Have historic properties been identified within the APE?

NO Do not complete the NHPA Section 106 EQ or initiate the Section 106 process at this time. Please reach out to RUS by submitting a question through the Contact Us page (available at this link: <https://www.usda.gov/reconnect/contact-us>) to determine next steps.

YES Go to Question 4.

4) **Adverse Effect:** An adverse effect occurs when a project may directly or indirectly diminish the integrity of a historic property by altering any of the characteristics that qualify the property for National Register inclusion. Specifically, if the project diminishes the integrity of a property's location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, then there is an adverse effect. Examples of adverse effects include:

- Physical destruction or damage
- Alteration inconsistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties (available at this link: <https://www.nps.gov/tps/standards.htm>).
- Relocation of the property
- Change in the character of the property's use or setting
- Introduction of incompatible visual, atmospheric, or audible elements
- Neglect and deterioration
- Transfer, lease, or sale out of federal control without adequate preservation restrictions

Are adverse effects to historic properties expected?

NO Do not complete the NHPA Section 106 EQ or initiate the Section 106 process at this time. Please reach out to RUS by submitting a question through the Contact Us page (available at this link: <https://www.usda.gov/reconnect/contact-us>) to determine next steps.

YES Agency intervention required. Additional information may be requested by RUS at the time the application is reviewed. Responses to the NHPA Section 106 EQ are complete.

5) **SHPO and THPO Response Period:** If the applicant sent notification or finding letters to the applicable SHPO(s) and THPO(s), has a response been received from any of these entities?

NO Go to Question 6.

YES Upload the SHPO(s) and THPO(s) response(s) to the Environmental Documents section of this application.

6) **SHPO and THPO Response:** If no response has been received, has the 30-day response period elapsed?

NO Identify when the 30-day response period will elapse: \_\_\_\_\_.

YES Responses to the NHPA Section 106 EQ are complete.